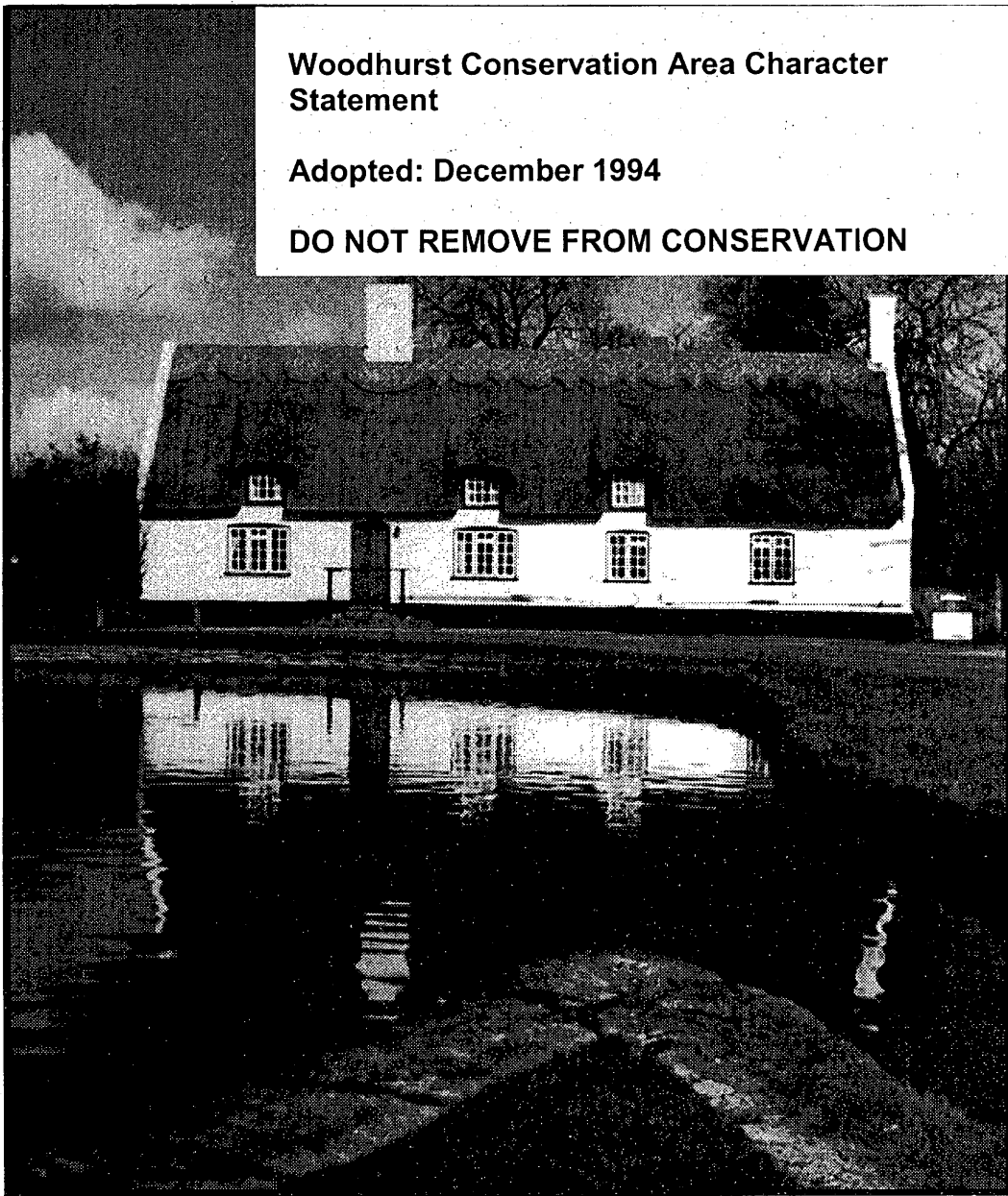

WOODHURST

CONSERVATION AREA

Woodhurst Conservation Area Character
Statement

Adopted: December 1994

DO NOT REMOVE FROM CONSERVATION



CHARACTER STATEMENT

Huntingdonshire  Planning

WOODHURST CONSERVATION AREA

CHARACTER STATEMENT

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Planning Committee
December, 1994.

FOREWORD

Sixty-two Conservation Areas have now been designated in Huntingdonshire. However, the act of designation is not an end in itself, but the start of a process to preserve and enhance the character of each Conservation Area. Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 requires Local Planning Authorities from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are Conservation Areas. Furthermore, the Government in its Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, on Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas, seeks the review of existing Conservation Areas and their boundaries against consistent local standards for designation.

Whilst it is the ultimate intention of this Authority to undertake boundary reviews and formulate policies for preservation and enhancement, this represents a very large workload which would require several years to achieve. Therefore, the most pressing priority is the publication of Conservation Area Character Statements which justify existing designations. The Statements are intended to provide guidance for formulating policies for preservation and enhancement and to assist in determining planning applications within Conservation Areas. They will also prove useful in individual cases which go to appeal, by providing additional documentation for Inspectors to assess the merits of the Local Authority's evidence.

The format of each Character Statement will consist of an introduction of the legislative background, followed by an assessment of the local setting, history, character and landscape setting (if relevant) of the Conservation Area in question.

A comprehensive list of the 62 Conservation Areas with plans of each area showing Listed Buildings and Ancient Monuments is contained in the booklet 'Conservation Areas in Huntingdonshire' published in October 1991 by the District Council. This document also gives summary information on the special nature of the control of development within Conservation Areas and this is reproduced for information in Appendix 1 to this Character Statement.

The District Council's Local Plan for Huntingdonshire (with proposed modifications incorporated) gives the general planning policies which the Council are pursuing to preserve and enhance Conservation Areas (four policies in all). These are contained in Appendix 2.

The District Council is currently producing advice and guidance notes on "Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings" and on "Residential Design". These documents will provide further information and advice to the householder, developer and others to maintain existing buildings and when building anew in Conservation Areas and elsewhere.

CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER STATEMENT

WOODHURST CONSERVATION AREA NO.61

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Conservation Areas are designated by the Local Planning Authority based upon the criterion that they are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Considerable scope and discretion can, therefore, be applied in such a designation. The process of designation is contained within Section 69 of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act. Prior to this Act, Conservation Areas were designated under the 1967 Civic Amenities Act. Section 72 of the 1990 Act requires the Local Planning Authority to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas in exercising its planning functions.
- 1.2 Apart from giving special consideration to applications for new development, the legislation affecting Conservation Areas also provides for control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and the felling and lopping of trees. Furthermore, in respect of those Conservation Areas designated prior to November, 1985, additional limitations have been placed on permitted development rights. Grant aid may also be available within Conservation Areas, either through Town Schemes or Section 10 of the Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act, 1972.
- 1.3 The Conservation Area for Woodhurst was designated by the District Council on 20th May, 1991. The purpose of this Conservation Area Character Statement is to:-
- i) Justify the Conservation Area designation.
 - ii) Justify the overall shape and area of the Conservation Area but not specific boundaries.
 - iii) Provide detailed information on history, architecture and landscape and their inter-relationships to guide developers and Development Control Officers when considering proposals within Conservation Areas to ensure the essential character of the area is preserved and/or enhanced.
- 1.4 Further guidance in this respect has been produced recently in Planning Policy Guidance Note No.15 - Planning and Historic Environment issued jointly by the Department of the Environment and the Department of National Heritage. The new document emphasises that it is important that Conservation Areas are seen to justify their status because "an authority's justification for designation, as reflected in its assessment of an area's special

interest and its character and appearance, is a factor which the Secretary of State will take into account in considering appeals against refusals of Conservation Area Consent for demolition and appeals against refusals of planning permission.

- 1.5 This Conservation Area Statement describes the essential characteristics of Woodhurst Conservation Area in justifying its status, thereby providing a basis upon which the Local Authority can assess development proposals and enable judgements on decisions to be made.

2. LOCATION

- 2.1 Woodhurst, a relatively small village of approximately 300 people, lies 2 miles to the north of St. Ives. Two thirds of the 1823 acres of the Parish surrounding the village consists of arable land on clay based soils. Woodhurst is a woodland ring fence settlement on the route between Oldhurst and Bluntisham with an oblong being formed by the two roads of Church Street and South Street.

3. HISTORY

- 3.1 Woodhurst is part of the Hurstingstone (Hyrstingestan, Hyrstington) Hundred, referred to in 1321 as the Hundred of Hirste. Hurstingstone took its name from the tribe of Hirstina or Hurstingas meaning 'forest dwellers' that inhabited the wooded district which included Oldhurst, Upwood, Woodwalton, Warboys, as well as Woodhurst.
- 3.2 It is believed that Woodhurst became a Romano-British settlement and it was during this period that much of the woodland was cleared so that the land could be used for farming.
- 3.3 It is thought that much of the land within the Hurstingstone area would have reverted back to forest during the Anglo-Saxon period when Woodhurst formed part of the Soke of Slepe or St. Ives (a Soke being a district under a particular local jurisdiction). This area forming part of the forest pasture which lay to the north of the estate's centre at Slepe on the banks of the River Ouse. Historically, the Manor of Woodhurst has been linked with Ramsey Abbey, however, in 1479, Anne Broughton who had acquired the Manor died and left the Manor to her son John Broughton, there ending the ties with The Abbey.
- 3.4 A considerable part of the village was destroyed by fire in 1834, and of those buildings that remained, only a handful located east of Harradine's Farm were considered worthy of listing, all of which lie within Woodhurst Conservation Area. Recent redevelopment to the west of Harradine House, Church Street of less notable architectural and historic merit has been omitted from the Conservation Area.

4. CHARACTER AND SETTING

- 4.1 One of the two entrances to Woodhurst is via the straight and very long Wheatsheaf Road to the east, the first impression being one of outward-looking properties located within a predominantly woodland setting. Turning north at the first junction, the village pond (Swan Weir Pond) may be viewed, flanked by an attractive group of detached properties. Two white washed, Grade II Listed, thatched dwellings (Horseshoe Cottage and Swan Weir) and a modern, cream coloured house known as 'Maycroft', create a visual focus around the pond at the north-east corner of the Conservation Area. Original thatch fire hooks are displayed on the front of 'Horseshoe Cottage' and provide a stark reminder of the fire.
- 4.2 Situated opposite Swan Weir Pond is a well managed grassed area enclosed by a concrete post and wire fence which serves to enhance this particular aspect of the Conservation area by providing an open contrast to the intimacy of the buildings grouped around Swan Weir. The importance of this open area is such that any new development upon it would be detrimental both to the setting of the village pond and the listed buildings nearby. Adjoining this area is the access to Manor Farm, which is enhanced by mature trees. Manor Farmhouse dates from the 17th and 18th Centuries and together with the granary close by is Grade II Listed; neither the farmhouse or granary are visible from the entrance on Church Street, but are visible from Wheatsheaf Road at the entrance to the Conservation Area.
- 4.3 Continuing west, the appearance of the north side of Church Street is predominantly one of modern detached dwellings, set back behind low walls and with a grass verge separating them from the road. The fine historic wall and traditional outbuildings at 'Far Leys' contributes significantly to the streetscene. From Anchor Cottage to the Parish Church, Church Street is flanked by footpaths giving this part of the Conservation Area a wide, semi-urban quality when compared to the intimate, rural feel conveyed at South Street.
- 4.4 The semi-urban character of Church Street is marked by back-of-footpath development where the road curves in a south-westerly direction near to the Post Office. The Post Office is a Grade II Listed, mid 19th Century house and shop of distinctive yellow ochre colour-washed brick and modern tile roof and is complemented by a wall mounted GR letter posting box and the nearby K6 type telephone call box. The hard landscape at this point contrasts greatly with the generally 'open' rural character of South Street.
- 4.5 The character of Church Street changes once again when approaching the small Parish Church of St. John the Baptist. This Grade II* Listed Building is constructed of pebble rubble with some freestone and Barnack Stone dressings and is capped by a weather boarded bell turret. There is one bell, inscribed:

'Hee that will be meri let him be meri in the Lord, 1624'

and is understood to be by William Haulsey. In front of the church stands the medieval churchyard wall which, coupled with a group of mature Silver Birches standing within the church grounds, forms an integral part of the street scene.

- 4.6 On the south side of Church Street lies St. John's Close, the entrance to which is enhanced by the white-painted village pump. In the context of surrounding development, St. John's Close is contrary in form and design, penetrating deep into the heart of the Conservation Area and contributing little to the character of a ring fence settlement.
- 4.7 Adjoining St. John's Close on its western boundary lies Church Lane, a footpath linking Church Street and South Street. The footpath is well landscaped on its east side, with brickwork dominating the west side, the effect being that little opportunity exists for pedestrians to view the Conservation Area from any point on the footpath, hence the footpath may be considered of limited intrinsic merit.
- 4.8 Harradine House and Farmhouse are 19th Century, Grade II Listed Buildings located opposite the parish church at the north-west corner of the Conservation Area. These buildings are of two storey, slate roof and white-washed brick appearance creating a focal point when entering the Conservation Area via Church Street to the west.
- 4.9 When entering South Street off Wheatsheaf Road, the first impression is one of 18th Century dwellings situated within a mature landscaped setting. Holdich's Farmhouse, an impressive red brick, Grade II* Listed Building, together with a fine red brick wall, dominates this south-east corner of the Conservation Area. Situated opposite and contrasting in appearance and style are 'Chelsea Rest' and 'Penny Farthing', a pair of single storey, white-washed brick cottages with half-hipped thatch roofs. Making a positive contribution to the character of Woodhurst and sympathetic to the setting of the listed buildings adjacent and opposite is 'Moat Cottage'. This new building is a thatched, white-washed brick cottage located behind a well landscaped frontage to the east of 'Penny Farthing'.
- 4.10 Continuing westward along South Street past 'Silverlands', and the character changes to one of open aspects to the north and south. The view to the north comprises a grassland area at the heart of the Conservation Area, enclosed by properties to the north and a strong landscaped boundary to the west. This open area to the south of Bulls Farm, should be protected thereby respecting and retaining the character of this ring fenced settlement. Looking in an easterly direction at this point on South Street, the vista is one of green farmland, a particularly important view.
- 4.11 Another area of open grassland, on the north side of South Street and within the Conservation Area, is situated west of South View. Although the lesser of the two 'open' areas on the north side of South Street, its presence serves to

enhance the street's rural character, whilst simultaneously providing a 'buffer' to new development to the north. The consequence of this much reduced area of 'open' land is that the character of Woodhurst as a ring fence settlement is diminished.

- 4.12 In contrast to development which has taken place to the east of Church Lane, a large tranche of open 'paddock' to the west of the Conservation Area remains relatively intact, reflecting the original character of this settlement. This and other open spaces between Church Street and South Street are substantial in area and their protection from development will help preserve the character of the settlement into the future.
- 4.13 Fullards Farm, a Building of Local Interest, is located between the 'paddock' area and Church Lane enhancing the rural character of South Street, its frontage formed by a number of trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order. The same Order also applies to a group of trees located opposite and on the west side of 'Pear Tree Cottage'.
- 4.14 The essentially rural character of South Street is not only derived from the open grassland areas and Fullards Farm on the north side but also by views of cow pastures situated behind properties to the south. Important long distance views of St. Ives are provided by the gap between 'Silver Birches' and 'Ridgeway' and to a lesser extent the gap to the east of 'Pringleside', offers views of the surrounding countryside. These gaps are an integral part of the character of South Street, where the relationship between the village and its rural environs is at its most intimate and therefore they should be retained.
- 4.15 There are numerous ponds located within or beyond the Conservation Area. The most significant contribution to Woodhurst's character is given by Swan Weir Pond, with Ridges Pond being clearly visible to the west of 'Pear Tree Cottage' (Building of Local Interest). Another pond site is located within private grounds at the rear of 'Moat Cottage', hence, this property's name. Opportunity may exist for some of the pond sites to be the subject of a management or enhancement scheme.
- 4.16 Although Woodhurst Conservation Area covers only half of the village its designation is important to the preservation and enhancement of the settlement's character. The original 'ring' village layout associated with traditional farming methods has been partially retained and where new development has occurred it has generally respected the settlement's character. Bearing in mind the effect that St. John's Close has had on the character of this 'ring' fence village, subsequent development in depth should be resisted.

APPENDIX 1

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL WITHIN CONSERVATION AREAS

One of the most effective ways of preserving and enhancing Conservation Areas is through the control of development. Listed buildings cannot be demolished or altered or extended without obtaining consent from the Local Planning Authority or the Secretary of State for the Environment. Similarly the right to carry out certain developments, within the curtilage of a dwelling which is listed, without having to obtain planning permission are reduced. When determining planning applications for development which affects listed buildings or Ancient Monuments, the Planning Authority must give consideration to the effects of the proposed development on their character. Since many Conservation Areas are centred on areas where there is likely to be significant archaeological interest, consent may be withheld or conditions imposed to enable investigation and recording to take place.

The designation of a Conservation Area gives further powers of control to the Local Planning Authority. In these areas the right to carry out certain developments without the need to obtain planning permission are reduced. In particular:

- i) the amount of extension to a dwelling is limited to less than 50 cubic metres or 10% of the original dwellinghouse.
- ii) no cladding of any part of the exterior by stone, artificial stone, timber, plastic or tiles is permitted to a dwellinghouse.
- iii) no alterations may take place to the roof of a dwelling which would result in its enlargement.
- iv) no alterations or extensions can take place within the curtilage of a dwelling to buildings over 10 cubic metres in volume.
- v) Satellite dishes are not allowed on a chimney, nor on any wall or roof slope fronting onto a highway.

Generally, planning controls in Conservation Areas are directed to controlling demolition. In this respect, Conservation Area Consent is required for the demolition of buildings and structures over certain sizes. Furthermore, anyone who wishes to lop, top or fell a tree within a Conservation Area must give the Planning Authority six weeks notice of their intention. This gives the Planning Authority the opportunity to make a Tree Preservation Order.

LOCAL PLAN POLICIES ON CONSERVATION AREAS

En5 DEVELOPMENT WITHIN OR DIRECTLY AFFECTING CONSERVATION AREAS WILL BE REQUIRED TO PRESERVE OR ENHANCE THEIR CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE.

Conservation is not preservation, and whilst the District Council is concerned to see the retention of the most important features and characteristics of designated areas, it is at the same time attempting to assimilate good modern architecture in historic locations.

The relevant statutory provisions are to be found in the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act, 1990. Subject to minor exceptions, no building in a Conservation Area may be demolished without the written consent of the Council, and trees within a Conservation Area (again with minor exceptions) are also given additional protection. Six weeks notice of any lopping, topping or felling of such trees must be given to the Council, in order that a Tree Preservation Order may be made if necessary. In Conservation Areas, there are reduced permitted development rights and proposals for development that are likely to affect the character or appearance of the area, may be of public concern and must therefore be advertised.

The District Council will continue to protect and enhance the character of the designated Conservation Areas. Particular attention will be paid to alterations to existing buildings and the design of new developments within the Conservation Area.

En6 IN CONSERVATION AREAS, THE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL REQUIRE HIGH STANDARDS OF DESIGN WITH CAREFUL CONSIDERATION BEING GIVEN TO THE SCALE AND FORM OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE AREA AND TO THE USE OF SYMPATHETIC MATERIALS OF APPROPRIATE COLOUR AND TEXTURE.

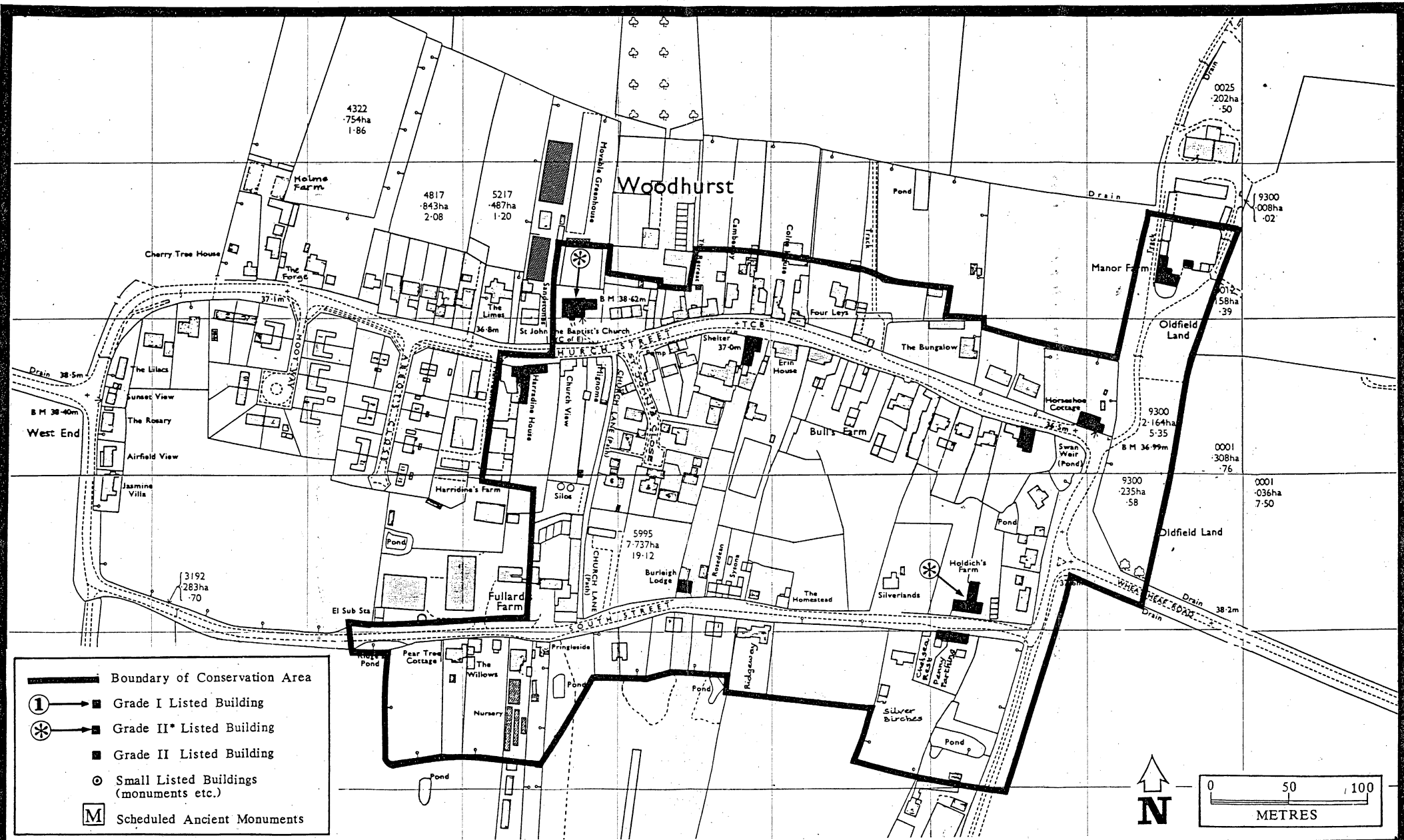
It is important to lay down basic design criteria when new development in a Conservation Area is being proposed. This criteria will ensure that new dwellings will follow the general pattern of the existing built form, materials and styles. The District Council will use the provisions of Article 7, of the General Development Order, 1988, to require details to support outline planning applications in Conservation Areas.

En7 WHERE DEMOLITION IS TO BE FOLLOWED BY REDEVELOPMENT, CONSERVATION AREA CONSENT MAY BE WITHHELD UNTIL ACCEPTABLE PLANS FOR THE NEW DEVELOPMENT HAVE BEEN APPROVED. IF APPROVED, THE TIMING OF THE DEMOLITION WILL BE STRICTLY CONTROLLED.

Proposals for redevelopment sometimes take a considerable time to implement. The demolition and clearance of sites before a new scheme has been approved or implemented could lead to the situation where an unsightly area in a Conservation Area is created and left for some time. The opportunity for a sympathetic replacement scheme may be lost if the designer does not appreciate the scale and form of the original building(s) now lost.

En8 DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT NORMALLY BE PERMITTED IF IT WOULD IMPAIR IMPORTANT OPEN SPACES, TREES, STREET SCENES AND VIEWS INTO AND OUT OF THE CONSERVATION AREAS.

Conservation Areas are made up of buildings, trees and open spaces (both public and private) which together form a cohesive area. It is recognised in the chapter on housing that within the environmental limits not all areas of land should be built on. There are important open spaces, gaps and frontages that should be preserved in their own right.



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WOODHURST

CONSERVATION AREA No. 61

Designated by
 Huntingdonshire District Council
 on 20th May 1991.